

## **Applicant: Greensboro, North Carolina**

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## “Creating a Culture of Inclusive Innovation”

### *Re-visioning Greensboro as a “Maker City” for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Economy*

#### **Expected Outcomes**

1. *Develop a **cohesive vision of cultural change** – identify gaps and work to bridge them through changing mindsets.*
2. *Develop a **highest potential and scalable** economic and innovation development plan.*
3. *Dramatically **increase our local resource capacity** through expanding diverse participation and **cross-boundary learning**.*
4. ***Fill our big gaps:** develop seed funding, establish a minority business accelerator, expand global opportunities, leverage broadband capabilities - while **eliminating and avoiding overlaps** that contribute to confusion and inefficiency.*

We are looking for big ideas - an over-arching innovative concept with a feasible strategic and tactical plan - that would not only catalyze major positive economic impact in Greensboro, but have a powerful impact on our state.

Greensboro is an intersection of technology and the liberal arts: creative artists and designers, engineers and scientists, thinkers and dreamers are the human capital of our community. With seven colleges and universities, including the nation’s largest HBCU (NC A&T) and the state’s most diverse public university (UNCG), Greensboro is a center of diversity of ideas.

A new cohesive vision of cultural inclusion that creates value for everyone in the community could establish Greensboro as a premier midsize community in the US. We want to develop the highest potential and scalable economic and innovation development plan in the country by dramatically increasing our local resources and capabilities. Through the development of a comprehensive strategy that has broad buy-in from passionate stakeholders and partners, we can achieve our objectives through our participation in InnovateNC.

Greensboro is poised to revive the economic and cultural vibrancy the city once embodied. There are considerable assets emerging and in place: Gateway University Research Park, Union Square Campus, Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts; along with a foundation of robust philanthropic partners, multinational businesses, an innovative non-profit sector and world-class health care system. The time is now with new economic development leadership, a city government open to public/private partnerships, university research capacity and a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. We have untapped human and intellectual capacity and hope to leverage InnovateNC to connect and catalyze these assets to revolutionize Greensboro.

Greensboro is developing new economic growth clusters through strategic recruiting and by investing in educational infrastructure and talent pipeline at the Joint School of Nanoscience & Nanoengineering as well as the new Union Square Campus, which will focus on advanced nursing. Our five growth clusters include aviation, supply chain and logistics, life sciences, specialized business services and innovative

manufacturing. For a midsize city, Greensboro has a long and impressive legacy of home grown corporate headquarters and mid-sized companies whose executives and managers have strong experience in developing and executing innovative growth strategies.

### **Entrepreneurship is a Core Value in Greensboro**

Greensboro is actively working to advance entrepreneurship education and training, to promote startup-friendly policies and programs, and to understand what new firms need. We seek to foster our startup communities and spur entrepreneurial activity. Our community has demonstrated commitment to developing a cohesive entrepreneurship strategy that supports entrepreneurs in Greensboro by expanding signature education programs, and investing in both proven and innovative models of education and startup acceleration.

- Our incubator, The Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship (NCFE), has launched over 387 businesses that created more than 2,500 jobs, serving the community since 1987.
- In 2013, the Greensboro Partnership created the Entrepreneur Connection (GPEC) to provide mentoring and advice to entrepreneurs and to create healthy networks with valuable connections. GPEC creates opportunities and programs through these exchanges that have transformed our entrepreneurship ecosystem. GPEC programs included Startup Weekends, Startup Bootcamps, Business Plan and Pitch Competitions, and provide core activities that catalyze the entrepreneurial community. The Triad Startup Lab business accelerator focuses on both experiential “learn by doing” and proven curriculum methodologies to accelerate startup business traction. All of these programs take place at co//ab – Greensboro’s first downtown co-working space in partnership with Elon University School of Law.
- The Forge is Greensboro’s downtown “makerspace” and attracts a community of creative people fostering innovation in 3-D printing, machining, woodworking and crafts – they have attracted 140 paid members in only their first year of operation.
- HQ Greensboro is our newest downtown co-working space and will open in August 2015. It is expected to magnify the amount of startups and entrepreneurial activity in the community. UNCG and NC A&T State University have expanded their presence at HQ Greensboro and their role in the community through programs such as the North Carolina Entrepreneurship Center’s ThinkHouseU, a living and learning environment for student entrepreneurs.

### **Diversity and Inclusivity Should be a Driver for Innovation**

Greensboro is a very diverse place with many underrepresented talents that offer significant untapped potential for driving innovation. Our city is privileged to have a vibrant immigrant population of around 35,000, or almost 13%. Greensboro has long been the largest hub of refugee resettlement in the state. Immigrants and refugees in our city are business owners, homeowners, taxpayers, artists, teachers, religious leaders, and contribute to the economic, social and cultural richness of our community. Yet, we continue to struggle with institutional locations, structures, and climates that can hinder our best efforts to build diverse and productive teams of colleagues.

Our universities host thousands of international students each year, send hundreds abroad and employ faculty members from all over the world. Global engagement is a key value at our higher education institutions, yet we have not leveraged vast global resources and connections in ways that can drive the local innovation economy.

We need to reframe aspects of our organizational and community cultures as we collectively consider how to best foster inclusive team building and increase our ability to leverage the diverse and creative talents in our city. Through the InnovateNC program, we will explore the connections between inclusivity and productivity in collaborative opportunities and problem solving that foster virtuous cycles of innovation.

We have many entrepreneurial platforms in place, but need a comprehensive strategy that broadens impact. We want to build and support a thriving and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem that is inclusive, sustainable and results in a high return for Greensboro.

### **Objective: Create a Culture of Inclusive Innovation**

Through InnovateNC, a partnership in Greensboro will launch to catalyze action around entrepreneurial and innovation inclusivity. It will accelerate business expansion, recruitment, innovation and entrepreneurship across the community and especially in previously underdeveloped arenas by bringing focused intention to recruitment and support of typically underrepresented and underserved groups such as: millennials, minorities, foreign nationals, immigrants, academic professionals and scientists, students, artists and our talented “makers”.

1. **Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping:** identify gaps and define roles and program focus of partners for a community thirsty for entrepreneurial startup programs.
2. **Business Development Community Map:** provide prospective entrepreneurs with the “right resource at the right time” for their business development.
3. **Community Leadership Development:** develop programs that encourage, connect and guide the next generation of leaders and promote and leverage best practices in inclusive innovation.
4. **Community Development Funding:** provide sources of capital and funding to seed startups and entrepreneurs of all kinds.
5. **Global Opportunities:** support and expand global engagement by working across sectors, cultures and borders as part of a global business ecosystem, ensuring logistical structures and educational programs are in place to effectively compete and collaborate in the global marketplace.

### **Organizational Capacity**

As an integrated economic development organization, the Greensboro Partnership brings significant infrastructure, marketing expertise, and relationships with business, academic, corporate and philanthropic organizations for Greensboro’s participation in InnovateNC. The organization will act as the anchor organization for the initiative and lead the effort of supporting the innovation council and its

ecosystem partners. Surrounding the Greensboro Partnership will be a strong network of organizations that will bring resources to bear to ensure Greensboro's successful participation in InnovateNC.

### **Local Partners and Financial Commitment**

As evidenced by our attached extensive local partner matrix and over 30 endorsement letters, Greensboro has a long history of public private partnerships among universities, business, economic development, foundations, government, nonprofits and our faith community. Egos are set aside for the good of the overall community, and new people and organizations are welcome to the table. In recent years, a number of successful initiatives have launched to demonstrate this increased willingness to partner in collective impact. InnovateNC will serve as a new catalyst to further strengthen our ability to work together and ensure economic prosperity for all in our community, as together we meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. As evidence, our partners have already committed the required \$15,000 in funding to participate in InnovateNC.

### **Evaluation and Data Collection**

The success of Greensboro's InnovateNC project will be measured through the direct impact of new initiatives that result from a more robust innovation culture and increased collaboration. Some of those measures will include: 1) the number of new companies created or recruited, 2) the number and quality of jobs at those companies, 3) the increase in early stage capital invested in companies and the breadth and diversity of companies receiving those investments, and 4) the increase in spinout and licensing activity from local universities.

As our proposed data partner, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has significant expertise in data analytics (quantitative and qualitative), geographic information systems, policy analysis and applied macroeconomics, data informed decision making and strategic planning. UNCG provides consulting services in the areas of research design, methodology, assessment and measurement, and program evaluation for businesses, state agencies, and nonprofits. This expertise is supported by a comprehensive array of analytical software, technology, and a robust computing environment with data security and comprehensive backup. UNCG is also a member of the National Consortium for Data Science, a collaboration of leaders in academia, industry and government formed to address the data challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, providing the structure and leadership to cultivate a focused data science community and break through the challenges of big data to drive the field forward.

### **Moving Forward**

Greensboro's InnovateNC project will connect and catalyze our many assets already in place and provide a framework for creating the missing pieces to help define us as the premier "Maker City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Greensboro already has an enviable quality of life, strong academic institutions, vibrant business and arts communities and a thriving downtown. With a proven history of collaboration and the commitment of all key stakeholder groups, Greensboro is poised to take full advantage of working with InnovateNC partners to create new opportunities that will drive inclusive economic growth. We look forward to working with the InnovateNC partners and other selected cities in getting started!